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FM REO KIRKUK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0692
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD PRIORITY 0654
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE
RUEHKUK/REO KIRKUK 0720

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000130

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 7/20/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#) [IR](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: KIRKUK ARAB LEADERS DENOUE PLAN TO RETURN ARABS TO THE SOUTH

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CLASSIFIED BY: Jim Bigus, PRT Team Leader, POL, Department of State.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: Several Kirkuk Arab leaders including Sunni and Shia representatives criticized plans to return Kirkuk Arabs to the south. They agreed that while many Arabs have already left, it was primarily due to discrimination, persecution, and arrests. They stated that Kurdish political parties were paying salaries to poor Arab families as enticement to relocate. Finally, they discussed a new group formed in Baghdad called "Kirkuk for Iraqis" that was headed by former Prime minister Ja'afri that plans to lobby Iraqi politicians, Turkey, and Iran in reference to Kirkuk's future. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) IPAO met with Ahmed Al-Ubaydi, the Kirkuk Head of the Iraqi Republican Gathering (IRG) and Coordinator of the Arab Consultative Council, the Sunni Arab umbrella organization in Kirkuk; Sheik Abdul Razaq Nawa Al-Ubaydi, head of the Ubaydi tribe in Kirkuk and vice president of the United Arab Front; and Office of the Martyr Sadr (OMS) representative Dr. Abdul Karim Khalifa al-Hassan on July 10 to discuss the implementation of article 140 in Kirkuk.

ARABS WILL FIGHT IF KIRKUK JOINS THE KRG

13. (SBU) Sheik Abdul Razaq Nawa Al-Ubaydi began the discussion by strongly stating that he was from Kirkuk and lamented current ethnic tensions in the city. He agreed that many Arabs have already fled to the south but that was primarily due to abuse, discrimination, persecution, and arrests. He specifically noted the negative effect on the community of arresting Arabs and sending them to the KRG where "they are lost", do not receive due process, and their families were

not told
of their status. Sheik Ubaydi stated that his children and grandchildren were born in Kirkuk, this was his home, and he would stay and fight if that's what it takes. He, and many like him, were currently cooperating with the local government but he noted that he would be "terrorist #1" if the Arabs were forced out of Kirkuk.

CITIZENS SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO MOVE FREELY WITHOUT COERSION

14. (SBU) OMS representative Dr. Hassan stated that all citizens in Iraq should be free to move and live without discrimination throughout the country. He used the United States as an example and felt that enticing people with money was as bad as forcing people to move. He noted that the Kurdish political parties were paying salaries to poor Arab families and coaching them to act as representatives of the Kirkuk Arab population. The Arabs who were paid used distorted statistics supplied by the Kurds and were not representative of "anything but greed" according to Hassan. He explained that most families that have moved have done so because of fear and hunger. It was lack of opportunity and harassment coupled with promises of payment that were encouraging citizens to say they want to move. According to Hassan, "Bremer was smart when he wrote the TAL, he recognized that Kirkuk needs to be an independent province". He also noted that claims of

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large
numbers of Arabs wanting to leave Kirkuk were Kurdish lies.

GROUP - "KIRKUK FOR IRAQIS" ORGANIZED

15. (C) IRG head Ahmed al-Ubaydi believes that the Kurdish dream for Kirkuk will never exist "unless all the Arabs in Kirkuk are killed". He stated that the only reason the constitution was originally passed was because there was an agreement to re-open discussions on article 140. He and a group of Sunni and Shia leaders from Kirkuk have been visiting Baghdad weekly to push for changes in the article 140 process. He noted that his group was also interested in talking to neighboring countries Turkey and Iran in the hope that they could have an impact on the Kirkuk negotiations.

16. (C) Sheik Ubaydi said that the Sunni and Shia Arabs of Kirkuk were working on a plan for Kirkuk's future. He described a Baghdad working group called "Kirkuk for Iraqis" headed by former Prime Minister Ja'afri. The group was in discussions with Iraqi politicians and planned to meet with Turkey and Iran. He noted that it was only Hakim who supports this idea of original Arabs. The Kirkuk for Iraqis group rejects the idea of original versus non-original Arabs in

Kirkuk. That
is only Kurdish propaganda according to the Sheik. Sheik Ubaydi
is
concerned that the Kurds and some of the Shia parties will make a
federalism deal that will lead to the de facto division Iraq. He
believed this was an ominous outcome because "Kirkuk would go to
the
Kurds and Southern federalism only means the south will be part
of Iran
and all patriotic Iraqis hate Iran".

BIOGRAPHIC NOTE

17. (SBU) Sheik Abdul Razaq Nawa Al-Ubaydi came to Kirkuk from
the south
in 1960. He is currently vice president of the Southern Tribe
Council,
vice president of the united Arab front and a member of the Arab
council. He patiently waits during discussions and when he
speaks
chooses his words carefully. He has a calm demeanor and
exhibits less
of a tendency towards exaggerated rhetoric.

COMMENT

18. (C) The Kirkuk Shia and Sunni groups feel abandoned by their
brethren in the south on the Kirkuk question and are attempting
to work
together. On the one hand they try to downplay their religious
identities and attempt to strike a traditional pan-Arab posture.
However, "we are all Arabs" is often interspersed with
statements like
"all Iraqis hate Iran". With the reference to Hakim and the
recruitment
of Ja'afri to their cause it appears the group is attempting to
capitalize on political differences in the Shia voting bloc.
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